

Congressman supports legislation to help protect the United States

April 27, 2007

Washington D.C. - Congressman Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Palm Harbor), a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, yesterday supported crucial legislation that would strengthen the safety and security of America's ammonium nitrate industry. Congressman Bilirakis joined his colleagues on the House Homeland Security Committee in the unanimous passage of the Secure Handling of Ammonium Nitrate Act of 2007 (H.R. 1680).

"There currently is no coordinated effort to monitor and regulate the sale and distribution of ammonium nitrate in the United States," said Bilirakis. "This bipartisan legislation would regulate the sale of ammonium nitrate-based fertilizer through the Department of Homeland Security, preventing bulk acquisition and use by terrorists."

When mixed with fuel oil, ammonium nitrate is a highly explosive and destructive substance. It has been used in terrorist bombings throughout the world. Just last year, after attempting to acquire three tons of ammonium nitrate, 17 Canadians were arrested and charged with plotting to attack targets with ammonium nitrate fertilizer-based bombs. Two notable bombings involving ammonium nitrate on American soil were in Oklahoma City in 1995 and at the World Trade Center in 1993.

H.R. 1680 would require that all sellers of ammonium nitrate register with the Department of Homeland Security. It also would require all purchasers of ammonium nitrate to provide personal information in order to obtain the chemicals. Producers and sellers would maintain records of all sales for at least two years. Sellers would have the right to refuse a sale and would be mandated to report any unexplained loss or theft of ammonium nitrate. H.R. 1680 will now move forward to the full House of Representatives for a vote. Congressman Bilirakis is urging the Speaker to move decisively in passing this legislation.

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"We recently honored the anniversary of those who lost their lives in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, where an ammonium nitrate bomb killed people. "We recently honored the anniversary of those who lost their lives in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, where an ammonium nitrate bomb killed 168 people. We owe it to the American people to ensure that this kind of attack does not happen again," said Bilirakis. "This legislation will help safeguard the United States from another ammonium nitrate attack. I urge the Speaker to swiftly move this critical legislation to the House floor for a full vote."

